

Conclusion

All Paths Lead to Light
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This report provides information about local, regional, and national efforts to protect and restore the health of the nation's water resources. It reflects three major concepts used in managing the nation's watersheds:

- The watershed approach offers the best hope for protecting and restoring the nation's watersheds.
- Local citizens should provide both leadership and active support for watershed management efforts.
- State and federal governments provide significant support to local watershed efforts, but they should coordinate and enhance this support to make it more effective.

The Watershed Approach

Healthy watersheds are some of the nation's most precious resources, but Americans contribute to water quality and habitat degradation with their actions in small ways every day. Our industries, our farms, our neighborhoods,



and our cars—many elements intrinsic to our lives—affect our water resources. Because the sources of impairment are so diffuse, a watershed approach to water resource protection and restoration is most appropriate.

Local Leadership and Engagement

Citizens are leading the drive to reverse impacts to watershed health. Community groups are recognizing watershed problems and taking the responsibility to address them. These local efforts are educating the greater public, building new and unique partnerships, and improving knowledge of how watersheds are threatened and impaired. They are establishing plans and priorities, securing financial and human resources, taking action to restore and protect watershed health, and evaluating their successes.

Governmental Collaboration and Support

Local watershed groups are not facing this challenge alone. State and federal agencies significantly support watershed efforts. These government agencies are coordinating their activities and improving their support so that it is more accessible, valuable, and conducive to on-the-ground and in-the-water results.

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These three concepts offer a blueprint for success. Building on these broad concepts and the specific recommendations for action in the last chapter, the nation's watershed protection and restoration efforts can gain momentum and make significant progress. The United States established a goal in 1972 to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of all its waters. We have yet to meet that goal. Through the efforts of watershed groups nationwide, that day will yet come.